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Bonfire victims' families look for fair trial

By Melissa McKeon
THE BATTALION

Families and lawyers involved in lawsuits surrounding the 1999 Aggie Bonfire collapse are still hoping for a fair trial proving that Bonfire was a fatal structure despite recent decisions.

Last month, Texas A&M agreed to voluntarily comply with a ruling made by the Texas Board of Engineers, mandating that any future Bonfire be supervised by

the University and a licensed professional engineer oversee its design and construction.

Sean Breen, brother of Bonfire victim Christopher Breen, told board members they were "compounding the total failure of engineering responsibility" by not punishing University officials named in complaints his family filed with the board.

"Our family was greatly disturbed by the Board's decision," Breen said. "The Bonfire Commission Report should be a

starting point, not an ending point."

Breen said his family is reviewing its options after the deal between the Board of Engineers and A&M is examined.

On July 23, a judge in Galveston removed A&M and University administrators as defendants in six federal lawsuits connected to the collapse.

U.S. District Judge Sam Kent ruled A&M was not liable because of governmental immunity. Kent concluded that the actions of 13 A&M officials named in the

suits, including former University President Dr. Ray M. Bowen, did not represent "deliberate indifference" as required by federal law.

Kent said University officials knew the danger the 59-foot Bonfire stack posed, but they were not aware it could collapse.

According to Kent's ruling, any state claims included in the federal lawsuits may be refiled in state court.

The families of the victims are disappointed with Kent's ruling, but attorneys

are sure their case is firm. They will appeal to the 5th Circuit of the United States Court of Appeals, said Steve DeWolf, attorney for Christopher Breen's family and others.

"From the depositions we took [from Dr. Ray Bowen, Dr. J. Malon Southerland and Rusty Thompson] it became clear that the administrators knew Bonfire was the most dangerous activity on campus

See **Bonfire** on page 2

Speakers chosen for graduation

By Kelln Zimmer
THE BATTALION

Over 2,220 Texas A&M graduates will be receiving diplomas Aug. 16 and 17 from University President Dr. Robert Gates. The graduates will also be addressed by a member of the first family of Texas and a one-time Texas A&M administrator.

Texas first lady Anita Perry and Southern Illinois University Carbondale Chancellor Walter W. Wendler were chosen to address graduates and undergraduates at the commencement ceremonies to be held next week in Reed Arena. The graduation speakers were announced last week, but due to staff changes, the Texas A&M Web site was updated yesterday to profile the speakers.

Wendler is an A&M graduate and was a dean in the College of Architecture before being named chancellor at Southern Illinois. He will address students in the colleges of architecture, engineering, geosciences, liberal arts, medicine and science at the commencement ceremonies Aug. 16 at 7 p.m.

Perry has positioned herself as an advocate for improved health care in Texas as well as activism for careers in nursing for young Texans. She will speak at the ceremony Aug. 17

at 9 a.m. to graduates in the colleges of agriculture and life sciences, business, education and veterinary medicine.

According to University Relations, the selections are made through faculty, staff, former students and student recommendations given to the president and vice presidents of the University.

The selections were made under former University President Dr. Ray M. Bowen. Bowen also requested all graduates stay until the end of the graduation ceremonies.

"The selections were made following recommendations under President Bowen, and letters were sent to graduates asking that they remain at the ceremony until the end was sent under President Bowen's signature," said Lane Stephenson of University Relations.

At past graduations, Bowen sent a letter to all graduates asking that all families, friends and graduates not leave the ceremony early. The letter expresses the importance of graduation and the respect entailed in staying through the entire ceremony.

In Bowen's letter to Spring 2002 graduates, he wrote the tradition is at risk because of the early departures by students and their families after they receive their diploma.

Johnson celebrates

By Kelln Zimmer
THE BATTALION

With one year under his belt, liberal arts dean Charles A. Johnson has no complaints about his post.

"402 days," he said with a smile. "It's been a good year, both for me and the college, and we've all had a great deal off fun in the process."

Johnson took the reigns as the head of liberal arts July 1, 2001. Before becoming dean, he served as professor and head of the Department of Political Science since 1992.

"It was an adjustment," he said. "When I was with political science, I got to do a lot of walking around and had a real sense of my organization. Now, I'm almost embarrassed to say it, but there are days when I don't leave this office."

"The biggest adjustment was seeing my calendar filled up with meetings. I still get to go out and talk to students and faculty. I have just learned to cherish those times more than before."

Johnson came to A&M in 1978 as an assistant professor of political science. A year earlier he received his doctorate from the University of Kentucky.

The most rewarding thing Johnson has seen over the last year is the interest others outside the college have shown in the initiatives set forth by liberal arts.

"The most gratifying thing for me has been the number of people, both in and outside the University, that have wished the college well and expressed their support," he said. "There has been an affirmation of the belief that it is critical to have a strong College of Liberal Arts in order for the University to be successful."

One of the items on the college's agenda has been pushing national prominence. With nationally recognized programs throughout the University, including engineering and business, the College of Liberal Arts faces a challenge to be recognized on a



RANDAL FORD • THE BATTALION

After his first year as dean of Liberal Arts, **Charles A. Johnson** has little to complain about. **Johnson** has put national prominence on the college's agenda.

national level.

"In order to achieve national prominence, you must have funding," Johnson said.

The Center for Humanities Research at A&M received an endowment from the Melbern G. and Susanne M. Glasscock Foundation and has since been renamed to reflect their gift. Johnson sees this as a step towards national recognition for the University.

Also, The Center for the Study of the First Americans has recently been housed at A&M, previously in Oregon, and touts the internationally famous archeologist Dr. Robson Bonnichsen. In addition, Dr. Charles H. Rowell is considered to be one of the most exciting additions to the University with the journal *Callaloo*, now

located on the A&M campus.

"Dr. Rowell and *Callaloo* bring a presence to Texas A&M among African American and African scholars and creative writers all over the country that will pay enormous dividends," Johnson said.

Johnson said hiring practices have been in use to support diversity.

"We conduct faculty searches with diverse candidate pools, and we are using the same tactics to attract undergraduate and graduate students to Texas A&M that bring diversity," he said.

One continuing challenge with attracting faculty is funding.

"To recruit and keep the best faculty you must be able to offer a competitive salary,"

See **Johnson** on page 2

GRADUATION CEREMONIES

Friday, August 16, 2002
7 p.m.

Speaker: Walter W. Wendler
Southern Illinois - Carbondale Chancellor

Saturday, August 17, 2002
9 a.m.

Speaker: Anita Perry
Texas First Lady

*graduates and families are asked not to leave early

MANDY ROUQUETTE • THE BATTALION

Endowment brings humanities center

By Molly McCullough
THE BATTALION

A recent endowment to the Center for Humanities Research by the Melbern G. and Susanne M. Glasscock Foundation makes Texas A&M one of the few public universities to have an endowed humanities center.

Melbern G. Glasscock, Class of 1959, Susanne M. Glasscock and the Melbern G. Glasscock Foundation have given numerous gifts to the University such as funding for the Susanne M. Glasscock Humanities Book Prize for Interdisciplinary Scholarship award, the Glasscock University Professorship in Undergraduate Teaching, a President's Endowed Scholarship, two Sul Ross Scholarships, as well being

a Pillar of A&M donor to the Texas A&M Foundation's Jon L. Hagler Center.

"Melbern Glasscock is very devoted to A&M in the way only former students can be," said James Rosenheim, professor of history and director of the Melbern G. Glasscock Center for Humanities Research. "He understands this gift will make a greater difference to A&M than perhaps another university with an already outstanding humanities department."

This endowment will aid the Center for Humanities Research in several important ways such as funding new programs for visiting faculty, undergraduate research and scholarship and furthering scholarship and

See **Humanities** on page 2

Prince says Saudi Arabia will deny United States access to attack Iraq

JIDDAH, Saudi Arabia (AP) — Saudi Arabia will not give the United States access to bases in the kingdom for an attack on Saddam Hussein, but the foreign minister said Wednesday the longtime U.S. ally does not plan to expel American forces from an air base used for flights to monitor Iraq.

In an interview with The Associated Press, Prince Saud said the 70-year-old U.S.-Saudi alliance was just as solid now as before the Sept. 11 terror attacks on the United States.

He said Osama bin Laden, who was stripped of Saudi citizenship and who directed the al-Qaida attacks, had intended to drive a wedge between the two countries when he chose 15 Saudi citizens to be

among the 19 hijackers who crashed planes into the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon.

Beyond that, Saud denied the kingdom sends financial aid to Palestinian suicide bombers who have killed more than 260 Israelis in 22 months of Mideast violence.

Opposition to a U.S. attack to overthrow Saddam is gaining strength in Europe as well.

In an interview published Wednesday, German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder said military action would wreck the international front fighting terrorism worldwide and in Afghanistan, throw the Mideast into turmoil and hurt the world economy.

In Britain, a country seen as President Bush's strongest backer against Iraq, Mike

O'Brien, Foreign Office minister for the Middle East, suggested Baghdad's recent gesture to readmit weapons inspectors could make military action unnecessary.

Saud said his government had made no secret of its opposition to a U.S. strike on Iraq.

"We have told them we don't (want) them to use Saudi grounds," the prince said when asked if the kingdom would allow the United States to use Saudi facilities for such an attack.

The United States reportedly has quietly moved weapons, equipment and communications gear from Saudi Arabia to the al-Udeid Air Base in Qatar in recent months, concerned the kingdom would limit Washington's ability to act freely.

Colombian hard line president takes office

BOGOTA, Colombia (AP) — Huge explosions rocked Colombia's capital and the area around Parliament Wednesday as hardline Alvaro Uribe entered the building to be sworn in as president of this troubled and violent South American country Wednesday. At least 12 people were killed in the blasts, witnesses said.

Three blasts hit within blocks of the Parliament building as Senate leader Luis Alfredo Ramos prepared to give the oath of office to Uribe, who has vowed to wipe out rebels who

have been fighting Colombian governments for 38 years.

At least one other explosion also went off adjacent to the nearby presidential palace, wounding a policeman, who staggered bloodied from the scene. The blast chipped the stone wall of the palace and blew out windows.

Government warplanes were seen streaking above the capital after the blasts.

Witness reported seeing 10 dead bodies in the street and in a demolished shack in the poor neighborhood, five

blocks from parliament. The attorney general's office also said at least two other people died in the explosion closer to parliament.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the blasts nor was it clear what had caused them. Rebels often use inaccurate homemade mortars in their attacks.

Concerned about a rebel assassination attempt, Uribe had forgone the traditional outdoor ceremony in Bogota's colonial central plaza and moved the swearing in to the parliament.



SOURCES: Associated Press, ESRI AP